



TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr SR King MP—Chair

Mr JR Martin MP

Mr LL Millar MP

Staff present:

Ms D Jeffrey—Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE PENINSULA DEVELOPMENTAL ROAD (LAURA TO WEIPA) PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2022

Cairns

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The subcommittee met at 8.53 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I now declare this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Peninsula Developmental Road (Laura to Weipa) Project open. Thank you all for your interest and for your attendance here today. I would like to start by respectfully acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose lands, winds and waters we all share. My name is Shane King. I am the member for Kurwongbah and chair of the committee. With me here today are Lachlan Millar, the member for Gregory and deputy chair, and James Martin MP, the member for Stretton. On 29 November 2021 the Transport and Resources Committee resolved to conduct a public works inquiry into the Peninsula Developmental Road (Laura to Weipa) Project. The purpose of today's hearing is to assist the committee with its consideration of this inquiry.

The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. As parliamentary proceedings under the standing orders, any person may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee. The committee will not require evidence to be given under oath, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. You have previously been provided with a copy of the instructions to witnesses, so we will take those as read. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. Media may be present and will be subject to the chair's direction at all times. The media rules endorsed by the committee are available from our committee staff if required. All those present today should note it is possible you may be filmed or photographed by the media during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone present to turn mobile phones off or to silent mode. I also ask that responses to any questions taken on notice today be provided to the committee by 4 pm Thursday, 16 June 2022. Today the committee will hear from the Cape York Land Council from nine to 9.30 am and Mr Roderick Burke from 9.30 to 10 am.

KEMP, Ms Sandra, Traditional Owner

PIPER, Mr Terry, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Cape York Land Council

WORMALD, Ms Jeanette, Strategic Communications and Policy Officer, Cape York Land Council

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Cape York Land Council. Would you like to make a short opening statement before we go to questions?

Mr Piper: Thank you for giving us the opportunity to meet with you and present today. With me is Sandra Kemp, who has come down from Weipa for today. Sandra has been involved in the road and has been on the traditional owner committee from the start. Jeanette Wormald is here with me as well. I would like to acknowledge Roddy as a traditional owner from the road area.

I have been involved with this since well before the Indigenous land use agreement was done. Everybody on the cape acknowledged that the PDR needed to be upgraded. It was a rough road. We were engaging with the Department of Transport and Main Roads about it. I suppose a couple of things coalesced when the Cape York United No. 1 native title claim was lodged and the funding started to come for the road. The commitment for funding for the road came through. We worked together with DTMR, and I think it was around the same time that Neil came on board with DTMR. We respected that there needed to be quick action to get the roadworks started. The funding was there, so we agreed with DTMR and Traditional Owners to do a standstill agreement where the land council and Traditional Owners would not take any legal action about roadworks and that there would be an Indigenous land use agreement done over the next 12 months. We then worked closely with DTMR. We dropped everything pretty well to get monitors out there, get the roadworks happening and to work together on this. It has been a very cooperative spirit ever since.

During the ILUA it was recognised that the road needed new alignments, needed to get gravel, needed to get water and a whole range of things, and that it was better to consolidate all of those approvals in one ILUA for the corridor—rather than seek compensation—to have jobs and economic opportunities come from the road. We saw that the real benefits of the road were the long-term jobs and construction opportunities, so we have worked very closely on this with DTMR over the years. There has been cultural heritage and monitoring done, and from my observation there have been fantastic outcomes as far as getting Traditional Owners working on the road and Indigenous businesses engaged on the road.

One thing we very strongly supported was the RoadTek arrangement. RoadTek would take on smaller sections of the road and be an incubator for Indigenous businesses, so that has been something we have strongly supported. Leaving some sections for large contractors and some sections for RoadTek to oversee has been a very successful model. We have some similar issues with roads—for example, the turnoff that goes to Lockhart River and up to Bamaga. There are at least probably 40 kilometres where there is no road reserve at all. You will see in our submission we have also promoted that a similar arrangement occur through to Bamaga and that consideration be given to that road becoming a state road with an ILUA arrangement. Sandra has been on the traditional owner committee, so I will hand over to Sandra.

Ms Kemp: I live in Weipa. My traditional area is the Musgrave Road, so midway. We are all learning through this process. We are all learning about the challenges and everything that goes on, especially around training. I would like to speak more about the requirement for training, but it has been very progressive. We are all growing together through this process and tackling issues as they arise. Seeing the outcomes that are happening has been very positive for me. I support the RoadTek model and what they have done. They have supported business. They have also supported taking leading hands in and giving them further training so they can go back to their Indigenous companies and manage a section of works competently, meeting capacity and all the rest of it.

I have a civil company. It is only new as of last year, so it is about having an understanding of some of the challenges. I speak to contractors, training providers and people on the ground, so it is about getting that better understanding of the challenges they have and being able to take it back to TMR and say, 'These are some of the things on the ground that are happening,' and being able to address those issues and work around it. One of the big things we are looking at at the moment is the training programs and how that needs a little bit of work. We have meetings coming up to address those issues which are across the cape. Can I ask which areas you come from? I can see, but I am not aware. Where is Gregory?

Mr MILLAR: Western Queensland.

Ms Kemp: It covers which area?

Mr MILLAR: Longreach, Boulia down to Birdsville, Emerald.

Ms Kemp: So you understand remoteness and the lack of work opportunities and all of rest of it.

Mr MILLAR: Absolutely, yes.

CHAIR: I am from Moreton Bay, so that is not an issue I have. However—people are going to get sick of me saying this—I did work in the Pilbara region of Western Australia for six years, so I have a bit of an understanding of just what it means.

Mr MARTIN: I am from the city. I am from the southern suburbs of Brisbane. It takes me half an hour to drive around my entire electorate. I appreciated the length of the drive from Weipa to Cooktown.

Ms Kemp: I suppose the trip up to Weipa would have given you an understanding of the road. I am not sure if it had any rain on it at the time. Lachlan, you probably have a little bit of an understanding of remoteness, opportunities and all the rest of it. For us, building capacity in our people, job opportunities and opportunities for growth in business so that when the road is complete there are still opportunities for maintenance that will increase employment for the smaller towns that do not have those opportunities of employment were very important to us. Those opportunities are now becoming a reality. We have things we still need to sort through, but it has been very progressive.

CHAIR: Yesterday the Cooktown shire talked about that, also remoteness and the ability to get urgent medical attention and the things you need. Tourists in particular just have no idea what they are getting into when they use the road, and towns along the way may not have those facilities in readiness. Do you want to add your thoughts to that? As the road continues to grow we would obviously hope that things would get better.

Ms Kemp: I do so, living in Weipa. I feel for people in Coen who cannot get food through the wet season. On the cost of food, it has been a bad year this year and last year through the wet season in getting food into Weipa due to issues with Sea Swift. They did not have the boats required to get food in so a lot of the times the shelves were bare. I am talking not even potatoes and not even onions. It is called creative cooking. When you have a family, you go in and go, 'Okay, what are we going to make tonight?'

Medical is important. It is the importance of having that accessibility. It is being able to get to the bigger providers like in Weipa. To have a bitumen road and a bridge across it, they can go, 'Hold on, we can get to Weipa,' which would increase. We have all been affected by deaths along the road due to the condition of the road. In the tourist season every year, we see the number of accidents along the road and the availability of services in our area. Food and medical are huge for us in the cape.

If you are living in-between those areas, a lot of people—not a lot but there are a few with helicopters now so that if anything happens they can chopper their family in. Not everyone can afford a helicopter and not everyone can afford the licence for a helicopter, but some people have made that choice so that if anything happens they can take their family in, and they use it for other purposes. Medical is huge.

Mr KING: I have been over in the west and it struck me the remoteness of some of the communities and also the residences. When they go to town obviously it is a big shop. It is serious to go to town for that. I was thinking that during the COVID years, the past two years, when the shelves were bare in the towns it must have been frightful. My sympathies for that. It would not have been easy.

Ms Kemp: Creative cooking! I think another perspective is that we were lucky in that we still could go and catch some fish and things like that, but that is not for everybody. A lot of people who come from down south would not know how to go and do those sorts of things or just do not do those sorts of things. COVID was an interesting period. It was nice not having the tourists, but it did affect the businesses in the area unfortunately. For those of us who were doing everyday work, it was nice not having to fight and scramble for food or whatever else at the shops.

Mr Piper: I do see the PDR as quite a game changer on the cape. It is going to open up economic opportunities in tourism that Traditional Owners need to get on the front foot for, to plan for. You will have a lot more people going up there and looking for things to do. It brings issues around how you control those people but there are opportunities there. There are opportunities for properties along the road and for some of those that have been transferred to Aboriginal land, like Mary Valley and Kalinga. There are tourism and agriculture opportunities that would not have been there otherwise.

We do hope that some of this brings a bit of a boost to cattle on the cape in some areas. Traditional Owners have grown up in the cattle industry. It is in their blood and they want to see improvements in that. Also, I think Weipa slowly needs to diversify from mining and a reliance on the mining economy. This road will then improve that. It will provide opportunities for export out of Weipa and various things that would not otherwise have been available.

CHAIR: I have a question on that. During our briefings along the way, we have had some ideas put to us on how to cash in on that tourist dollar. It has been suggested that some people will fill up with fuel in Cairns and get all their food and not come and spend the money. There needs to be a way to actually get that money when people are enjoying the beautiful place where you live. You need to get some compensation for that to be able to make it grow. Do you have any ideas?

Mr Piper: There is quite a lot of Aboriginal land along the road. Where there are opportunities, where people are looking for areas that they know are safe areas to pull off the road and camp, they might pay something for that where there are some facilities. There are areas up along the road that are spectacular but inaccessible at the moment. Once the road gets upgraded, there will probably be money that can make some of those places more accessible. You are right: there will be a lot of free and independent tourists who are probably not buying, but they all need to buy fuel on the way and they all need to buy food.

Ms Kemp: I follow a lot of the Facebook cape adventure pages, just to see what people are saying about our area. A lot of recommendations are to pull up at the roadhouses and the different areas. Late last year I went up to the Bamaga area for a bit of a break. It is like they have everything set up so perfectly: you can go here for pizzas one night, there for fish and chips. It is set up so that different nights have different specials on.

The cost of food is an issue. It would be nice to have that reduced. I have a large family. We spend \$500 to \$1,000 a week, maybe—depending. The cost of food is phenomenal. I do not know what you can do about the fuel prices. The fuel prices at the moment have risen and there is the cost of transporting it in as well. That is a bigger scale issue.

As long as people are pulling up, when you go to these different roadhouses and things like that the food is fabulous and the service is fabulous. You can see that with people saying, 'Great burger here', 'Pull up for this and that.' It would be nice to start more advertising on the different things. The Archer burger is renowned. Show what is great at each of these locations and have it more public for tourists and locals alike. Mapoon, just north of Weipa, has a new cafe. The number of people who travel from Weipa just for a morning to go and get a burger and have a day out because the food is fabulous is amazing. It is locally owned and locally run. I think we need to really sell the area a lot better.

Mr MILLAR: Sandra, I picked up on something you mentioned before. Is there a bit of a monopoly on barge services, getting goods and services to Weipa and what is the impact of that? Would the developmental road ease that monopoly?

Ms Kemp: Through the wet season, we only have one provider. I utilise a particular truck provider. We own an ice cream van as well so I am regularly getting things. I use a certain truck company. Come the wet season they have to go through that provider so, yes, another provider would be good. It would probably put more competition into the game if the road was opened and the trucks could run more regularly. The cost difference is huge.

While I was working for a company up there and I was running my grounds maintenance team, we had a massive contract. I had ordered a tractor and I had ordered a mower. The cost of mobilising that through that company increased by, I think it was, \$2,000 from the dry season to the wet season. The company I had bought the equipment from—how can you justify increasing your quote because it is now the wet season? He ended up getting it reduced, but it was a phenomenal difference in price.

The other issue, and everybody is aware of it, is that the mining company gets first priority. A lot of things are just put to the side and you are waiting. I normally will order my products on a Monday and they are delivered on a Thursday if I am going through the trucking company. I waited three weeks to get my products up on the barge because it was not a priority. You are fighting the mining company as well. It makes it very difficult. It has gone through Weipa commerce. It is a large discussion point that local businesses are second best. It affects them running through the wet season in just providing for the local people because they know that their things will be sitting in storage for a long period.

Mr MARTIN: The committee understands that, in terms of your concerns in your submission in relation to employment and training, you brought up issues about people being employed for temporary or short periods. Do you have any suggestions about how that could be improved? You mentioned the RoadTek program. Can you maybe expand on that for the benefit of the committee?

Ms Kemp: This is something I am passionate about. Currently—and I am not sure if Lachlan is aware of this—there is a huge shortage in terms of civil operations and civil operators. It seems to be everywhere at the moment. In Weipa alone, they are flying in well over 100 civil operators because there is no experience. Through the PDR process, we want the training and development. The problem is that some works are for only three or six months. To gain the civil operation certificate, it is a three-year sign up, but it can be done in 18 months. I have had discussions with training providers and with contractors to try to gain an understanding so that I can feed this information back to our ILUA committee. Contractors are tendering on a job. They have a budget to stick to. They have a time limit to stick to because that wet season is coming and you need to be done and out of there. The whole job can be squashed in one downpour.

I have spoken to contractors and asked, 'How does this affect you? You have a KPI to meet this training, how is it affecting you?' Some of the comments I have had are, 'It is very difficult because we still have to meet our contractual requirements; we still have to meet our deadlines and all the rest of it.' 'How do we support you?' It would be better to not have green trainees. If we have a green trainee, it takes a lot more work for us to train these people up. If the dozer is there and you need to have outcomes, when do you put that trainee on that dozer, on the excavator or whatever else? I had discussions with contractors around that and asked, 'How do we overcome this?' Then we were talking about the terms of the contracts. Some are only three months and some are six months. We rarely get seven or eight months out of a contract. What happens to the trainee?

Through discussions with training providers, I found out that it is happening everywhere. When contractors are coming in to build something in a community here—whatever works they are—they are required through KPIs to take on a trainee or employ local but, once their contract is finished, they

are gone and these people are left with only part of the skill set. It is an ongoing issue. TMR has lined up some meetings with some different departments at the end of this month to discuss it further. Through my business, I have taken on a couple of trainees because I can see the huge gap. Most of my operators are older. There is a gap in the skill set. A lot of them ask for a minimum of two years experience before they will put operators on a job because of safety and all the rest of it. I fully understand that.

How do we get these young ones trained up? I have taken on a couple of trainees through our business and have discussed it with one contractor. They are taking them on for the three months that they are there. I have then spoken to the next contractor who said, 'Yes, we can take them on until the end of the year. That gives me seven to eight months worth of training. Then I come back home to Weipa and have gone to Rio and said, 'Look, at the end of the year I will have these two trainees with X amount of experience; will you take them on?' They said, 'They are not green so there is less risk involved.' They are going to take them on. We need to understand that process. It needs to be a flowing process. We need someone looking at all of these trainees and trying to work out how this process will flow because of the gaps in the industry and the skill set. We need to build capacity.

The other thing we offered was if you are under the pump with your contract and you want these people to gain experience in a certain area, we will provide one of our experienced operators to go down and do the training on the job site. At the end, it is a win for me. At the end, they get a win; I get a win. We have to look outside the box in terms of how we complete the training for these trainees and start getting more civil operators out there.

CHAIR: It sounds like you have informally set up a group training scheme and it needs to be legitimised.

Mr Piper: It is a bit like that. We recognise that the PDR cannot deliver the kind of training outcomes on its own that people are looking for because of the nature of the work—short-term contracts. You cannot do much about that. How do you set up arrangements where people can get experience and training or have their training before they start on the PDR, come on to the PDR, work there and then move on, as Sandra has been saying. It is something that entrepreneurial people can do. Sandra does it. Roddy has done it. We need government support for that kind of model. Our experience is that this is not something that the state government is in a position to coordinate. None of the government departments have sufficient responsibility for it to do that continuity. It needs to be some kind of private arrangement where there are entrepreneurs who are doing it, but it needs government support.

Ms Kemp: The big thing for me is that these machines cost a lot of money. If you are hiring a machine, the fuel for them and the servicing are big dollars. We need to be able to provide the training across several different machines. Not one company has them all. You might go to the next one. There is a huge opportunity in the wet season for everyone whose machines are sitting in the backyard to get these training programs done so that by the time these contracts come around these guys are familiar with the machines. You are comfortable with their skill set and they just need to go out in the field and learn the process there. There has to be something done. The gap in the industry is huge. Why do we need to fly people in from down south when we have a lot of unemployed people in our area who just need training?

The other thing is that not everyone wants to work for the mine all year round. Some of them just want to work the season. They do not want to have to move to Weipa. They can get on these contracts, come for two weeks, go home to their community all wet season, come back through the year and do it again. It suits a lot of people. I was surprised to realise how many people preferred that employment option. We have to look outside the box. There needs to be support to fill this gap in the industry. I know that it is not just in our area. I know that everywhere there is a huge gap in experienced civil operators. It is about having a skill set so that when these people come in and have to meet a KPI to offer training, you do not send in someone who is too green and they know that they can put a little bit of time into them and keep going about their business to meet their contract and still do the right thing by upskilling people.

CHAIR: As a tradesperson, I know that it would be easier to get the green person to do some menial thing rather than focus on training. That is not fair to them. I understand that continuity of training. As you said, you do three months here, wait a while and then do some more. We need that continuity, because you lose those skills over that period. I appreciate what you have said and it is good to get that on the record.

Mr MILLAR: Sandra, keep doing what are doing. Keep pushing ahead. I know it is tough. I come from an area where we are trying to get people to have that consistency. Just keep doing what you are doing and keep pushing. Keep working with the department of transport people.

Ms Kemp: Thank you.

Mr MILLAR: If we can do anything to help, just let us know.

Ms Kemp: Thank you. We just have to keep talking.

CHAIR: Are there any further comments?

Mr Piper: The PDR ILUA was one of the first times in Australia that that kind of thing had happened, particularly at that scale. We have been very pleased with the outcomes. There were teething problems along the way and as Sandra said there have been things that we have needed to work out along the way, but there has been a lot of goodwill there to do that. We see it as being this opportunity that is the incubator for a whole range of things. People who work on the PDR might then get contracts with local government, the Indigenous councils and all that. We applaud what has happened.

Ms Kemp: There are a lot of outcomes: training and development, employment, better medical services, an increase in tourism, better food supply and all the rest of it. I feel for the Coen community once the wet season kicks in. There is nothing.

CHAIR: As you said, you can fish in Weipa.

Ms Kemp: Yes. From training and development right through to better services, it is just positive all around.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for that. Thank you for your participation. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the proceedings and it will be on our parliamentary webpage in due course. It will be published there.

BURKE, Mr Roderick, Private capacity

CHAIR: I will not go through the spiel again. Thank you very much for coming today, Rod. I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Burke: Thanks for the invitation. I must say that I procrastinated about attending this hearing over a period of time. I had a few communications from you to come along. Recently I had a telephone conversation that encouraged me to come along and share my deep felt passion and feelings about my traditional owner group. It revolves around the Archer River bridge project and the road access. That is my mum's traditional country. Counter to what the Cape York Land Council will tell you, there is no other traditional owner group where that bridge is going to go across.

The Cape York Land Council keep moving the goalposts under traditional native title issues. Since the No. 1 claimant has come along, they have moved the goalposts so many times that it has created divisions within our family groups and our extended family groups. It has caused a lot of friction because they moved the goalposts. We were all initially identified as Kaantyu peoples stretching from, to my knowledge, the southern bank of the McDonald River—I do not know if you know the geography of Cape York, but that is way up past where Bramwell Station is. Do you know where Bramwell Station is?

CHAIR: No.

Ms Burke: Okay—and stretching right down as far south as Coen. Our traditional country sits around that Archer River area. Through a number of activities that the Cape York Land Council have done in the past—one being the gas pipeline project; I am not sure if you know of that one. It was proposed that a gas pipeline be built from Papua New Guinea stretching across the Torres Strait and down the centre of the cape. That research identified a number of traditional owner groups who have country along the proposed pipeline route. They know where our country is because they are the ones who did the research and proposed it.

Coming back specifically to what encouraged me to come here, it is the issue of our cultural practices and knowledge being destroyed by them through their actions of managing or mismanaging information. They say to us that there are other groups or other interests. This comment was made quite a number of times. I first heard it from them when a meeting was organised between me, the land council, Balkanu and TMR. That is when I first heard there are 'other interests'. It was repeated a number of times through that session—'There are other interests'. It has continued to be said.

Only just the other day I found out who those other interests are. It is a family group. That same family group I talked to on the phone and they say, 'That is Hudson country.' That is my mother's maiden name. They have been talking to other family groups saying, 'No. You cannot go there because that is Hudson country.' Within the traditional owner families, they know but the representative body, the Cape York Land Council, tends to differ. Why? Not only are we at risk of our cultural heritage being destroyed or being mismanaged; but we miss out on economic opportunities because a lot of the activity to date has favoured this 'other interest' in terms of employment.

You talked earlier about training. I myself am the owner of a registered training organisation which is soon to go under because we cannot get work in Cape York. Primarily it was to do with governance training. We were the preferred provider for ORIC, the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, but COVID put the kibosh on that because we could not deliver accredited training for a certificate in governance anymore. After COVID was cemented around the nation, ORIC went to online training for governance training. We were not geared up for that.

We tried to get into that market but the problem with that was that a lot of our people, my people, did not have the skills to engage with technology nor the patience to engage with technology to have governance knowledge imparted through that little square screen. That is why participation rates dropped off a bit. I think ORIC is now picking up on that, but I think for us the boat has sailed. It looks like the RTO will more than likely go under. That is sad.

Even within the training environment, we tried to venture into Cape York and we got feedback about civil construction skills being required not only on the PDR but within the communities themselves—Aurukun, Lockhart, Mapoon. Individuals within those communities wanted to work in that particular area of driving machinery. I used to say to them, 'You don't drive machinery. Anybody can drive a machine, but to operate it is a different skill.'

Getting back to the Archer River project, I wrote a number of letters after that meeting. One was to Minister Crawford seeking a stop order on that project because of this cultural heritage. We believe that people who were working in that area on our country were not authorised to do that. What sorts of reports were they providing through the channels of the Cape York Land Council back to Cairns

TMR? How did TMR do their due diligence to say that those reports were, in fact, fact and genuine? I asked that question. TMR's response was, 'We have an agreement with Cape York Land Council to do that for us.' There is no dotting of the 'i's and crossing of the 't's in this particular area of cultural heritage as far as I am concerned with whatever that agreement is between TMR and the Cape York Land Council.

If you go on to the TMR website, in that area you will see on their webpage they have an agreement with Cape York Land Council, Balkanu and Kalan. Kalan is a TO group with a business operating out of Coen. They get a lot of work on the TMR projects. I take leverage from a saying Noel Pearson said some years ago: it is our right to take responsibility. I have been participating, and Terry will know this, about my mother's country, my grandmother's country, for quite some years now. I want that responsibility. My families want that responsibility. We want that, but we are being omitted to participate in that by this moving of the goalposts and its identification of this 'other interest'.

As we speak today, four or five members of my family have only just started to do cultural monitoring down at that bridge project. My knowledge of cultural monitoring appears to be all wrong. I thought that you would go in there on to virgin country to have a look and to identify cultural items that needed to be saved or rescued or whatever. It appears that I was wrong, because what is happening there now is that cultural monitors are walking behind machinery and, if bones are dug up or anything, they stop. It is too late. It is way too late. That is what is happening. It is way too late.

I am getting a bit off track. The response from Minister Crawford's area in terms of cultural heritage under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 was that he did not see a need to place a stop order on that project. The response—and I do not know who he engaged with or how he conducted this investigation—was that no cultural monitoring activity has happened and it will not happen until after the wet season and into the dry season later this year.

I got that email in April. It has now been found out—because I am talking to the traditional owner families that have actually been working there and they have been able to observe from working there, and by my younger brother—that in the conversation that cultural monitoring had been done. Mr Terry Piper informed me as late as a week or two weeks ago that they have engaged an archaeologist and all those works have been done. So what is the cultural heritage mob, the acting director out of Brisbane, writing to me and saying to me? How did he conduct his investigations? Who did he conduct his investigations with?

There are a lot of unknowns in this whole issue. It is hurting. It is hurting me and it is hurting my family. Something needs to be done. We want to engage. We want those infrastructure projects to go ahead because that creates employment opportunities and opportunities for skills development. In my family grouping, we have a number of skilled personnel. We also have members of the family who do roadworks, who have contracts with Cook shire. They steer clear of the PDR for some reasons that are not clear to me. Others had trucking companies. Individuals have skills as electricians. I myself am a diesel fitter. There are carpenters. There is a whole heap of them but then there is the general labour thing.

My vision is to also look at skills development and capacity development. Stretching from Mapoon all the way down to Aurukun, you have international mining companies—Metro Mining, Rio Tinto, Glencore. They all have mining operations happening there. They all have opportunities—and they say they have opportunities—for skills development. If you know the mining industry, you know that most of it is in machinery operation. Why are our boys not getting those opportunities? In some of these communities—and I will say it—it is possible laziness and they are not being encouraged. Why? I do not know. Is it because of alcohol and drugs? Is it because of other conditions that are placed on these fellows through domestic violence? All of these things are lifestyle things in our communities so they do not participate in these economic opportunities. They really do not.

Getting back to the Archer River project and the Cape York Land Council, the way they manage information or manage and utilise misinformation is not contributing to identifying and working with the proper Traditional Owners to seize upon these economic opportunities. I only talk for that project, but has this happened along the PDR from Cairns to Weipa? I do not know. Only they can answer that. Maybe you can investigate that.

CHAIR: We appreciate you getting it all on the record. It is in the inquiry now, so thank you for that. You were talking about the training and that the RTO may sadly fold. When you spoke about training in governance, is that management of projects or the governance aspect?

Mr Burke: It is mainly to do around the committees. It is inclusive of management of projects. The PBCs, the Prescribed Body Corporates, that are set up after native title determinations are the target area, but there are also other boards that are not PBCs—like land trusts under state legislation—that also need that skill development.

CHAIR: It sounds like that high level thing. Without that, all the other bits fall apart. Another question is to do with something that has come up a few times and I am sure it will be in our report—that is, internet access. You said that people had trouble with the small screen and I have been known to have that myself over the years as well. In terms of internet access, we have noticed it with phone access. That lack of internet access affects their ability to get on and do that training. I am not putting words into your mouth.

Mr Burke: We also provided very short courses on computers. The other short course we did was getting mothers back into the workforce—all of that kind of area. As I said, as we travelled the length and breadth of Cape York, we found that more and more young males, in particular—not so much the females—wanted to drive that machine.

CHAIR: Not operate, and I noted that distinction because I do agree—a steering wheel attendant or an operator.

Mr MILLAR: Roderick, thank you for coming in. I absolutely understand your frustrations. Is the breakdown in the relationship with the Cape York Land Council or TMR? Could you explain to me where the problem is?

Mr Burke: It is the Cape York Land Council. That is the problem. There are a whole heap of compounding issues and it all revolves around that No. 1 claim. Yes, we want our land, but we also want the responsibilities to go with it. Their actions and their progressing of the No. 1 claim is another big story that we just do not have the time to talk about. It has demised and destroyed our cultural structures and our cultural belief within my family group. It has created so much division in there.

Mr MILLAR: How do you fix it? What is your solution?

Mr Burke: Just recently we had a family meeting. Throughout this process of looking at a native title negotiation for our country, we continually asked the Land Council, 'Can you come and organise to assist the families to come together to get a direction from them of where, when and how in terms of our needs?' We continually got knocked back—no, no, no. Until recently, all of a sudden they decided to support the group coming together. I do not know if it is just Roderick Burke, I do not know if it is just me, but they went through another channel to bring the family together.

Mr MILLAR: Is the solution slowly working towards where you want it to be?

Mr Burke: Yes. We have only had this one meeting and coming out of that meeting we want to have another one. Even the activities of the Land Council have gone and knocked on different doors to get participation. It is a mishmash of where they go and who they want to talk to. One could say it is selective. For what means and for what end, I do not know, but at the end of the day they get their contractual agreements satisfied with TMR. What we get is crumbs and we still laze around in our communities hoping for the next opportunity: 'Pick me, Sir. Pick me. I'm willing to take responsibility. I'm willing to work. I want to work.'

CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming in and getting that on the record.

Mr Burke: Can I just say something?

CHAIR: You certainly can.

Mr Burke: I spoke about my procrastination in terms of coming here. I hope something can be done yesterday, more expediently, because what will happen is we will miss the boat again. We will miss out. That bridge will be built and we will not be the first ones to cross that bridge and be proud of it because our hands contributed to the building of that piece of much needed infrastructure. I certainly hope this committee can fast-track some activities to get me and my family involved in activities that happen on our country. I will say this here: there are no other interests on the site where that bridge is to be built and the access roads.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. You will get a transcript of today's proceedings and it will be on the webpage in due course. I thank everyone for coming. I declare the hearing closed.

The subcommittee adjourned at 9.56 am.